

PLANNING YOUR ACQUISITION CAREER

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Introduction

The Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO), which reports to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, has developed numerous career program opportunities to ensure there is an adequate pool of future military and civilian acquisition leaders. To optimize your ability to take advantage of these valuable career-enhancing opportunities, the ACMO suggests that you refer to the following guidelines.

Civilian Guidelines

1. *Determine if you are in an Army Acquisition and Technology Workforce (A&TWF) position.* If you are uncertain, your supervisor should be able to tell you if you are in an acquisition position. Recruitment announcements, position descriptions, and some position requirements documents will also indicate if a position is an acquisition one.

2. *Be aware of how your acquisition career field (ACF) fits into the workforce.* The A&TWF provides cradle-to-grave life-cycle support. The A&TWF has 10 functional career fields: Program Management; Contracting; Industrial/Contract Property Management; Purchasing; Manufacturing; Production, and Quality Assurance; Business, Cost Estimating, and Financial Management; Acquisition Logistics; Information Technology;

Systems Planning, Research, Development and Engineering; and Test and Evaluation.

3. *Contact your acquisition career manager (ACM).* Following placement in an acquisition position, you should first contact your ACM, who will advise and assist you in planning your career development. Your status and location determine which ACM you contact. The Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) ACMs support military officers, Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) members (GS-14 or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level and above), and members of the Competitive Development Group (CDG). Regional ACMs support all others.

4. *Prepare an acquisition career record brief (ACRB).* Work with your ACM to develop an ACRB, which is an automated, authenticated, official record of your education, training, and acquisition assignment history. Initiating changes and ensuring your ACRB is kept updated is your responsibility.

5. *Refer to the Development Model in the Acquisition Career Development Plan (ACDP).* This model provides a career-planning framework. Request that your ACM and/or supervisor assist you in determining where you are on the model and in planning your career progression strategy. Upon recommendation by your ACM, you may also wish to obtain advice

from your Acquisition Career Management Advocate (ACMA). ACMAs are senior civilian AAC members in organizations that have a high concentration of A&TWF employees.

6. *Prepare an individual development plan (IDP).* The IDP is a 5-year plan outlining your education, training, and experience goals. An IDP helps you determine and define your career goals and objectives in concrete terms; i.e., where you are in your career (on the ACDP Development Model) and where you want to be, both in the short and long term. Work with your supervisor and agree on a plan that is consistent with the model and your goals. Document the desired education, training, or experience on your IDP and obtain your supervisor's approval.

7. *Become certified in your ACF (the foundation and bottom level of the ACDP Development Model).* Attaining Level III certification is the mark of proficiency in your ACF. The requirements by ACF may be found in Appendix B of the *Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Catalog* (<http://www.dau.mil/catalog/catalog.htm>). If you do not understand any of the requirements, you should contact your ACM for clarification.

8. *Commence career-broadening activities (the intermediate level of the ACDP Development Model).* When you have become Level III certified in

your career field, you should broaden your career by doing the following:

- Apply for learning opportunities offered in the *Acquisition Education, Training and Experience (AETE) Catalog*. These opportunities range from leadership development courses to degree completion/master's degree programs.

- Ask your ACM about courses offered in your area through the Regional AETE Program.

- Seek developmental/on-the-job training opportunities that provide broadening/cross-training experience.

- Become certified at least at Level II in one or more other career fields.

- Look into the availability of rotational/developmental assignments in other organizations.

9. *Obtain an individual assessment of your strengths and weaknesses in terms of leadership competencies.* An assessment instrument, the Acquisition Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (ALEI), will assist you in planning your leadership development needs, particularly as you become proficient in your acquisition career field (attain Level I, II, or III certification) and start your broadening experience.

10. *Be aware that various boards and competitive development programs will require submission of a Senior Rater Potential Evaluation (SRPE) for GS-13, -14, and -15 applicants (or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level).* The purpose of the SRPE is to rate the leadership potential of workforce members. Along with the ALEI above, ratings will also assist you in identifying your leadership development needs.

11. *Obtain Acquisition Corps Eligible (CE) status.* CE membership provides opportunities to prepare for critical acquisition positions (CAPs). CEs with Level III certification are given competitive and noncompetitive career-enhancing opportunities. CE membership is open to all civilians who are not in CAPs but meet qualifications.

12. *Apply for the CDG Program.* Members with CE status and Level III certification who are GS-12 or GS-13 or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level may apply for the CDG Program. This 3-year developmental training program offers high-potential, board-selected personnel expanded training, leadership, and other career-development opportunities.

13. *Apply for AAC membership (Strategic Leadership level of the ACDP Development Model).* The AAC is a subset of the Army A&TWF.

14. *Apply for acquisition command and product manager positions (LTC/GS-14 or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level) and acquisition command and project manager positions (COL/GS-15 or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level).* Best-qualified boards are held annually.

15. *Apply for the Senior Service College Program.* The Industrial College of the Armed Forces offers the Senior Acquisition Management Course (ACQ 401). This is the preeminent course for members of the Acquisition Corps and, as such, is an important step in your career. The University of Texas offers its equivalent, the Senior Service College Fellowship.

16. *Participate in continuous learning (CL) activities.* Throughout your career, you should participate in CL activities. Once you are certified in the position you encumber, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) Policy on Continuous Learning for the acquisition workforce requires that you complete a minimum of 80 continuous learning points (CLPs) every 2 years. Attainment of CLPs is not limited to the traditional classroom setting but may be earned in numerous ways. Work with your supervisor to ensure attainment of CLPs is considered when developing your IDP and ensure points earned are captured on your IDP, which is used to document CL.

Military Guidelines

1. *Contact your acquisition career manager (ACM).* Upon accession into the AAC, you should first contact your ACM, an assignments officer from PERSCOM's Acquisition Management Branch (AMB), who will assist you in planning your career development. The list of ACMs and contact information may be found at <http://www-perscom.army.mil/OPfam51/ambmain.htm>. Click on **AMB Staff**.

2. *Determine career objectives. Discuss your preferred areas of concentration (AOCs) with your assignment officer.* The A&TWF is made up of officers and civilians who perform work throughout the system's life cycle. The A&TWF has five military AOCs: 51A-Systems Development (Program Management); 51C-Contracting and Industrial Management (Contracting); 51R-Systems Automation Engineering and Acquisition (Communication-Computer Systems); 51S-Research and Engineering (Systems Planning, RD&E); and 51T-Test & Evaluation. A more detailed description of these career fields is located in DA Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management*, Chapter 47, and at http://books.usapa.belvoir.army.mil/cgi-bin/bookmgr/BOOKS/P600_3/47.0.

3. *Prepare your officer record brief (ORB).* Work with your ACM to establish a correct ORB, which is an automated, authenticated, official record of your education, training, and acquisition assignment history. You are responsible for changing and updating your ORB.

4. *Refer to the Development Model in the Acquisition Career Development Plan (ACDP).* This model provides a career-planning framework. Request that your ACM assist you in determining where you are on the model and in planning your career progression strategy.

5. *Prepare an individual development plan (IDP).* The IDP is a 5-year plan that outlines your education, training, and experience goals. Determine and define your career goals and objectives in concrete terms; i.e.,

where you are in your career (on the ACDP Development Model) and where you want to be in both the short and long term. Using guidance provided by your ACM, work with your supervisor and agree upon a plan that is consistent with the model and your goals. Document the desired education, training, or experience on your IDP. For detailed information on completing the IDP, go to <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil>. Click on **Your Acquisition Career File**, then on **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**.

a. *Evaluate advanced civil schooling (ACS) opportunities.* There are many opportunities for the AAC officer to attend ACS. However, career timelines and type of degree sought will influence which program fits your career. Contact your ACM for a detailed discussion of the opportunities for your specific goals. The AMB home page outlines the available programs.

b. *Participate in long-term training opportunities.* Several long-term training programs are available to military officers. These opportunities include the Army's Training With Industry Program, the White House Fellowship Program, and the Army Congressional Fellowship Program. Detailed information on these programs is located online at <http://www.perscom.army.mil/opmd/opmd.htm>. Click on **Functional Areas**, then click on **Advanced Civilian Schooling**, and then click on **Scholarships and Fellowships**.

c. *Apply for leadership development courses offered in the AETE Catalog.*

d. *Participate in continuous learning (CL) activities.* When you are certified in your position, the USD(AT&L) Policy on Continuous Learning for the acquisition workforce requires that you earn a minimum of 80 CLPs every 2 years. Attainment of CLPs is not limited to the traditional classroom setting but may be earned in numerous ways. Work with your supervisor to ensure attainment of CLPs is considered when developing your IDP and ensure points

earned are captured on your IDP. The CLP policy and Army implementing instructions may be found at <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil/>. Click on **Policy/Procedures**, then on **Continuous Learning Information**, then on **USD(AT&L) Cont. Learning Policy**.

6. *Become certified in your primary area of concentration.* The goal for proficiency in your AOC is attainment of Level III certification. The certification requirements, by acquisition career field, may also be found in Appendix B of the *DAU 2001 Catalog* at <http://www.dau.mi/catalog/catalog.htm>. If you do not understand any of the requirements, contact your ACM for clarification.

Some ways to obtain the training necessary to meet the certification training standards are as follows: attend DAU resident/onsite courses, take DAU distance learning (Web-based) courses via the Internet, obtain credit for equivalent courses, and obtain credit through the Fulfillment Program. Go to <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil>. Click on **Policy/Procedures**, then **Fulfillment Information** for DOD fulfillment policy and Army implementing instructions for fulfillment. (All Level III DAU courses and those offered through distance learning may not be fulfilled.)

DAU course listings and schedules are online at <http://www.dau.mil/course/courseinfo-catalog.htm>.

7. *Commence career-broadening activities.* When you have become proficient in your primary career field, you should broaden your career activities by doing the following: pursue functional assignments in your secondary career field, become at least Level II certified in one or more other career fields, and apply for learning opportunities offered in the *AETE Catalog*. For information on acquisition-funded opportunities as well as other opportunities and application instructions, go to <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil/> and click on the Acquisition Education, Training & Experience Catalog icon.

8. *Apply for Acquisition Corps membership.* Membership is a

requirement for assignment to a CAP (lieutenant colonels and above).

9. *Complete the Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC).* AAC officers should attain Military Education Level (MEL) 4 certification, either through resident or nonresident completion of CGSC, prior to primary zone consideration for selection to lieutenant colonel rank. AAC officers compete for selection to attend resident CGSC just like the officers in all other Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) XXI career fields.

10. *Compete for acquisition command and product manager positions (lieutenant colonel).* Best-qualified boards are held annually. Information on available positions, eligibility, and application requirements may be found at <http://www.perscom.army.mil/OPfam51/ambmain.htm>.

11. *Compete for Senior Service College (lieutenant colonel/colonel).* Best-qualified boards are held annually. Information on available positions, eligibility, and application requirements may be found at <http://www.perscom.army.mil/OPfam51/ambmain.htm>.

12. *Compete for acquisition command and project manager positions (colonel).* Best-qualified boards are held annually. Information on available positions, eligibility, and application requirements may be found at <http://www.perscom.army.mil/OPfam51/ambmain.htm>.

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